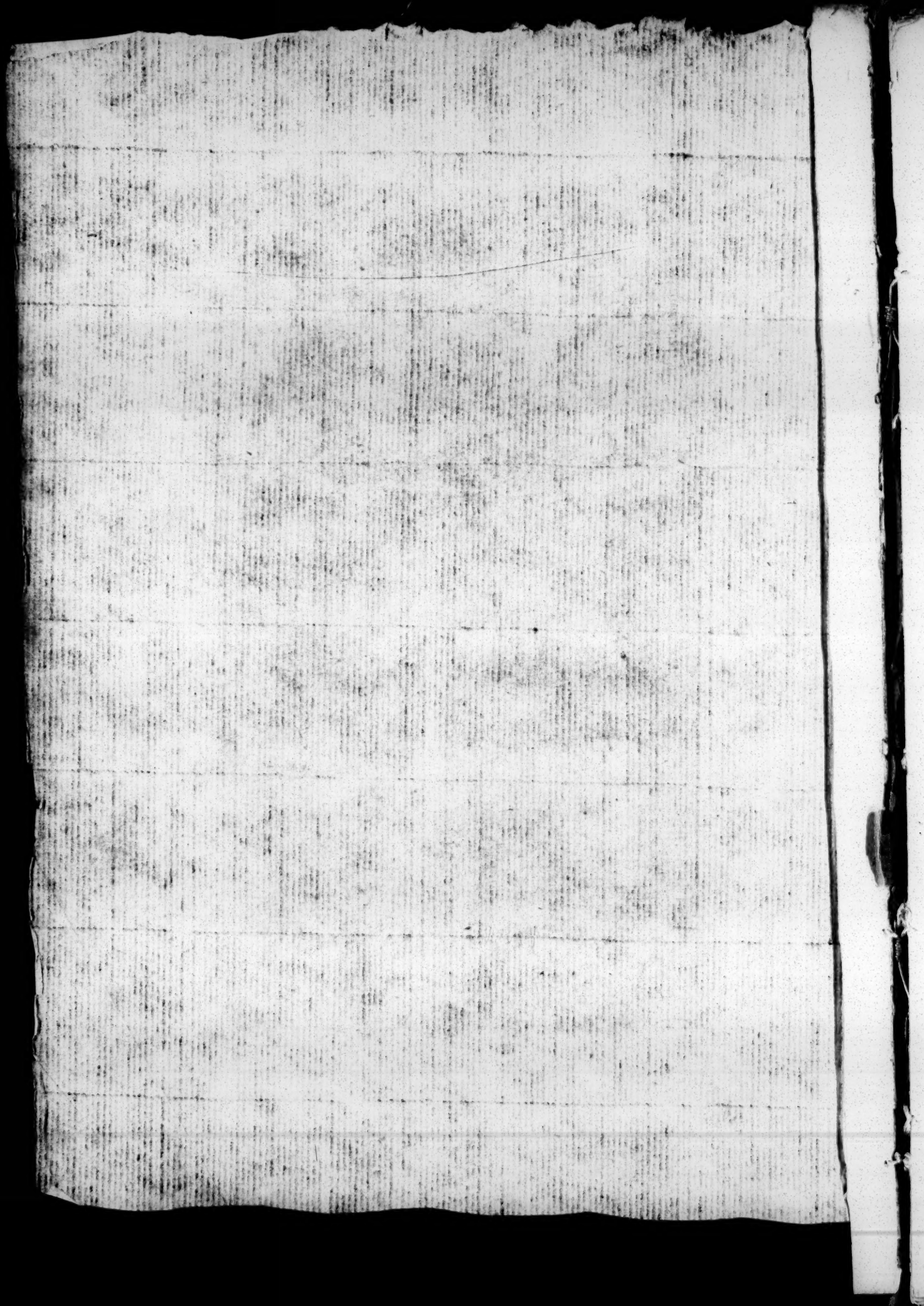




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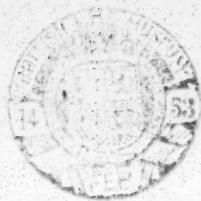




E. P. Burney del.

Bartolucci sc.

Printed for J. Bell British Library Strand London Sep. 22. 1790.



11773 g. 24.

COMUS.

A

MASK.

BY JOHN MILTON. ²

ADAPTED FOR

THEATRICAL REPRESENTATION,

AS PERFORMED FIRST AT THE

THEATRE-ROYAL, COVENT-GARDEN,

IN THE YEAR 1744.

REGULATED FROM THE PROMPT-BOOK,

By Permission of the Managers.

"The Lines distinguished by inverted Commas, are omitted in the Representation."

LONDON :

Printed for the Proprietors, under the Direction of

JOHN BELL, *British Library*, STRAND,

Bookseller to His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales.

M D CC XCI.



THE
BIOGRAPHER TO THE WORLD.

IT may be necessary exactly to state what are the pretensions specifically of the brief BIOGRAPHY prefixed to these Volumes:—that expectation may not be disappointed, and that blame may not be imputed to him for omissions of what were by no means comprehended in his plan.

All that is here to be sought, is a concise characteristic SKETCH of the Author, to whose play it is prefixed. ANECDOTES that are entirely new, can scarcely be hoped at this period. Most of these Lives have been narrated in various forms, with minuteness of research, and length of detail. The confined space that can here be allotted, rather prescribes selection from what is known already, than research after novelties to swell the amount.

If, multum in parvo, much in a narrow compass be found; if the philosophising spirit of Biography render character more perspicuous, and peculiarities prominent; if, exemplifying upon habits and manners, a lesson neither inelegant nor tedious be offered to leisure and curiosity; if the errors of the mind be in any degree corrected and reformed, and the social propensities of mankind strengthened and extended; I have my wish.

THE BIOGRAPHER.

JOHN MILTON.

TO write at this time the life of an Author like the Poet abovementioned, would be superfluous and impertinent.—Every circumstance that attended him is so generally known; his admirers have so minutely recorded his *excellencies*, and his enemies have taken the same kind care of his *failings*, that little more is left for us than to consider him in the particular province of a DRAMATIC POET.

MILTON appears to have been but slenderly gifted for the effects of Tragedy—His powers inclined little to the *pathetic*, though EURIPIDES was his favourite author. The other grand principle of tragic effort seemed as little within his attainment.—The *terror* that his conception would excite is rendered less vivid by the solemn prolongation of his period, and the concatenation of his lines.—The nervous brevity of Shakspeare he admired, but he did not imitate. His two dramatic poems, exquisite as they are, considered as the vehicles of florid imagination and elegant expression, are nevertheless utterly remote from

modern sentiment and modern language. There is little to regret that, following the obvious bias of his mind, he soared into the epic field of unbounded invention, and permitted the Drama of his country, gothic and barbarous as he deemed it, to remain without a contest in those hands to which NATURE seemed to have consigned the portraiture of MANNERS and of MAN.

Fortune is frequently favourable in the arrangement of events: an escape from the enthusiasm of his politics might have rendered the great MILTON an uncouth Historian, and an unsuccessful Dramatist. The extent of his attainments made him little doubtful of their capabilities. It was the most felicitous circumstance of his life, that abandoning the DRAMA *religiously*, and History from calamity, he fixed upon a Theme of such exquisite beauty as enabled him to bear the evils of blindness and adversity, soothed by the nightly harmonies of heaven, and sustained unflinching by the holy fervour of inspired POESY.

COMUS.

THIS beautiful MASK has given rise to much Criticism, respecting circumstances of the scene to which objections are applied:—we shall briefly consider them with all possible respect—as the authorities are of high eminence.

FIRST—It is objected, that there is a considerable impropriety in the SPIRIT addressing the Audience to acquaint them with his nature and mission, in a monologue of extreme length, in the First Scene.—The remark is, however, attempted to be repelled by a reference to the continued CHORUS of the *Greek drama* never vacating the stage.—This palliation will, notwithstanding its tone of triumph, be of little avail, until it is shewn that there is in Comus any CHORUS whatever. The Greek audiences were not Choroides; that constant occupant of their Theatres, denominated the CHORUS, was relevant to the Drama, and as expedience demanded, either of VIRGINS or SENATORS, SOLDIERS or PRIESTS. The Address is, in truth, an elegant absurdity—and intended to the audience.

To the SECOND—Dr. JOHNSON has hinted at the ridiculous expedient to celebrate the beauty of Philosophy, and the sanctity of Virginity, in the disputa-

tion of the Brothers overtaken by night; and by darkness divided from their Sister. From this charge the Bard may be more easily vindicated—Why they were so long absent is another question—I have to account for the disputation: we find them in the double obscurity of night and a thick shade formed by innumerable boughs. To dissipate the fear of the Younger Brother for his Sister's safety, the Elder descants upon the unassailable nature of virgin purity. In the uncertainty of their situation, to move was dangerous; to expatiate, therefore, while it fortified their minds against alarming apprehension, deceived the weariness of *time*, combined with the aking privations of *silence* and *darkness*.

COMUS, as it is here given, is an adaptation to the modern stage—by the retrenchment of much Dialogue, and the addition of many *Airs*.—That the Poetry of this beautiful piece suffers by a modern hand can be little doubted. Veneration for the Author might wish it in the original state; but a dramatic exhibition must please to be repeated;—the aim should be to venture as little innovation as possible. The Music of ARNE, in the modern *Comus*, is well known; it is as intelligent as modern music can be.

Let not this article be closed without paying to deceased merits the praise so deservedly their due:—From the late Mr. HENDERSON'S performance of *Comus* was derived one of the most luxuriant feasts

that the writer of this article ever banquetted upon. The jocundity—plausibility—festivity, and voluptuousness he assumed, were among the finest effects of his consummate abilities. His manner of reciting the rich melody of his first speech, and the happy contempt of

“ The *blabbing* Eastern Scout, the nice Morn, &c.”

he who *has* heard will never forget—he who has *not* will never *conceive*.

PREFACE.

THIS Mask was first represented at Ludlow-Castle on Michaelmas-day 1634, before the Right Hon. the Earl of BRIDGEWATER, Lord President of Wales: the principal Performers were the Lord Brackly, Mr. Thomas Egerton, and the Lady Alice Egerton*. In the year 1774 it was abridged, and has ever since been performed as an Afterpiece at the Theatre-Royal in Covent-Garden. The following were the reasons offered to the Public in favour of the Abridgment, and were prefixed to an edition of the piece then published in its curtailed state.

“ Pure Poetry, unmixt with passion, however admired in the closet, has scarce ever been able to sustain itself on the stage. In this Abridgment of Milton’s *Comus* no circumstance of the drama contained in the original Mask is omitted. The divine arguments on temperance and chastity, together with many descriptive passages, are indeed expunged or contracted; but, divine as they are, the most accomplished declaimers have been embarrassed in the recitation of them: the speaker vainly laboured to prevent a coldness and languor in the audience: and it cannot be dissembled that The Mask of *Comus*, with all its poetical beauties, not only maintained its place on the theatre chiefly by the assistance of music, but the music itself, as if overwhelmed by the weight of the drama, almost sunk with it, and became in a manner lost to the stage. That music, formerly heard and applauded with rapture, is now restored, and the Mask, on the above considerations, is curtailed.

* The Music was originally composed by Sir Henry Lawes, who also represented the Attendant Spirit. The present Music is the composition of Dr. Arne.

“ As a further argument in favour of the drama in its present
“ form, it might perhaps be urged, that the festivity of the cha-
“ racter of Comus is heightened by his assisting in the vocal
“ parts as well as in the dialogue, and that theatrical propriety
“ is no longer violated in the character of the Lady, who now
“ invokes the Echo in her own person, without absurdly leaving
“ the scene vacant as heretofore, while another voice warbled
“ out the song which the Lady was to be supposed to execute.

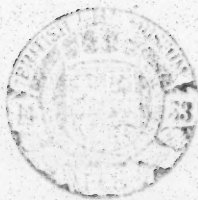
“ To conclude, it may not be impertinent to observe, that
“ The Faithful Shepherdess of Beaumont and Fletcher, which
“ is esteemed one of the most beautiful compositions in our
“ language, not only afforded our Author the first hint of this
“ Mask, but that several brilliant passages of Comus are imi-
“ tated from that excellent performance; yet it is remarkable
“ that the play of The Faithful Shepherdess, being merely poe-
“ tical, was condemned on its first representation; for which
“ hard fate, though succeeding critics have reprehended the
“ barbarism of that age, yet no attempt has ever been hazarded
“ to restore the hapless drama to the stage.”

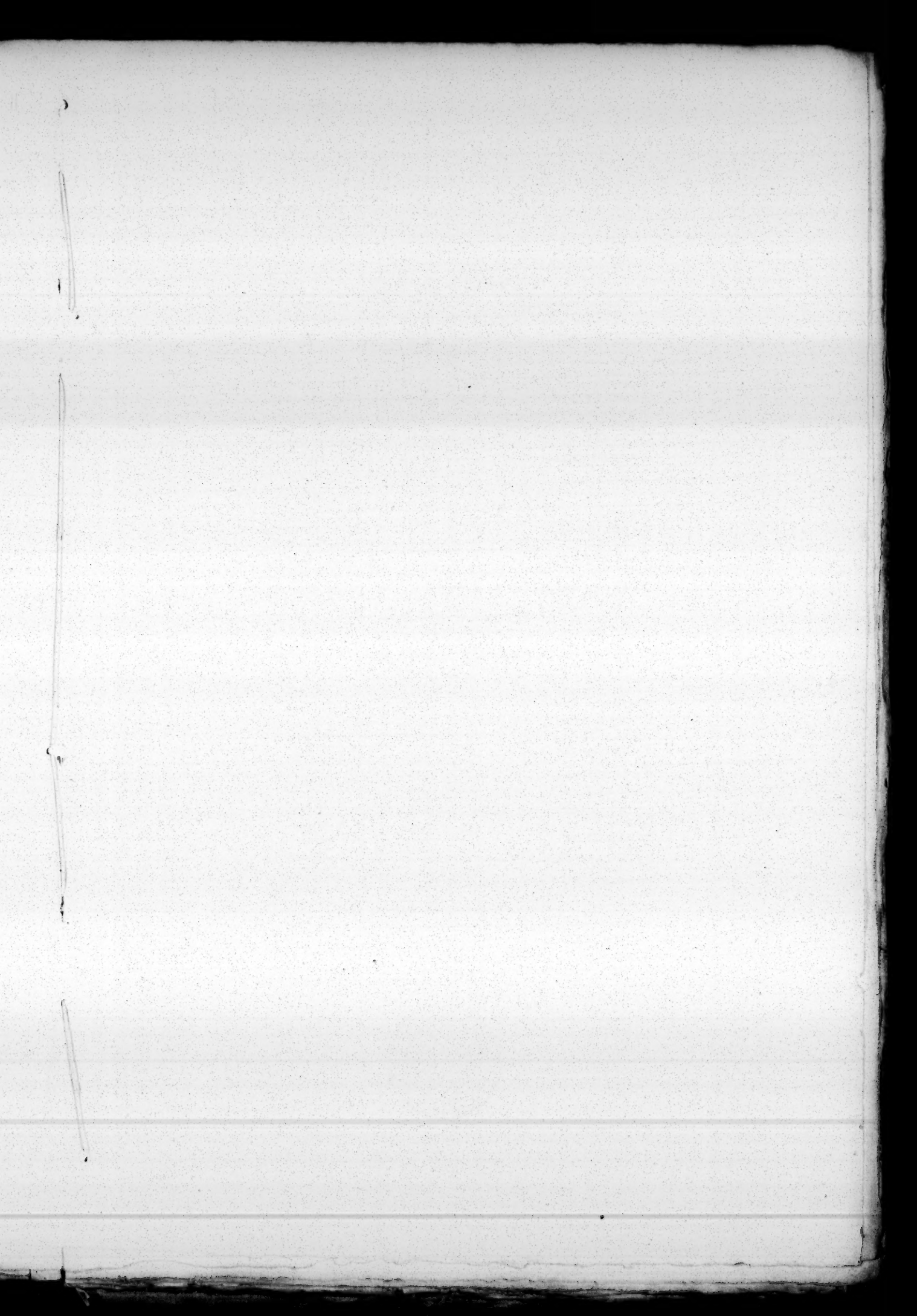
PROLOGUE.

*OUR stedfast Bard, to his own genius true,
Still bade his Muse* "fit audience find tho' few;"
Scorning the judgment of a trifling age
To choicer spirits he bequeath'd his page.
He too was scorn'd, and to Britannia's shame
She scarce for half an age knew Milton's name :
But now, his fame by ev'ry trumpet blown,
We on his deathless trophies raise our own.
Nor art nor nature did his genius bound ;
Heav'n, hell, earth, chaos, he survey'd around :
All things his eye, thro' wit's bright empire thrown,
Beheld, and made what it beheld his own.*

*Such Milton was : 'tis ours to bring him forth,
And your's to vindicate neglected worth.
Such heav'n-taught numbers should be more than read,
More wide the manna thro' the nation spread.
Like some bless'd spirit he to-night descends,
Mankind he visits, and their steps befriends ;
Thro' mazy errors dark perplexing wood
Points out the path of true and real good,
Warns erring youth, and guards the spotless maid
From spell of magic vice by reason's aid.*

*Attend the strains; and should some meaner phrase
Hang on the style and clog the nobler lays,
Excuse what we with trembling hand supply,
To give his beauties to the public eye:
His the pure essence, ours the grosser mean
Thro' which his spirit is in action seen.
Observe the force, observe the flame divine
That glows, breathes, acts, in each harmonious line.
Great objects only strike the gen'rous heart;
Praise the sublime, o'erlook the mortal part:
Be there your judgment, here your candour shewn;
Small is our portion—and we wish 'twere none.*





Dramatis Personae.

DRURY-LANE.

		Men.
COMUS,	- - - - -	Mr. Wroughton.
FIRST SPIRIT,	- - - - -	Mr. Haymes.
ELDER BROTHER,	- - - - -	Mr. Benson.
YOUNGER BROTHER,	- - - - -	Mr. Banks.
BACCHANALS,	- - - - -	{ Mr. Kelly, Mr. Dignum, & Mr. Sedgwick.
		Women.
LADY,	- - - - -	Mrs. Kemble.
EUPHROSYNE,	- - - - -	Mrs. Storacce.
BACCHANTES,	- - - - -	{ Mrs. Edwards, Miss. Barnes, Mrs. Fox, &c.
SABRINA and PASTORAL NYMPH,	-	Miss Romanzini.

Bacchanals, Naiads, Spirits, &c.

COVENT-GARDEN.

		Men.
COMUS,	- - - - -	Mr. Farren.
FIRST SPIRIT,	- - - - -	Mr. Thompson.
ELDER BROTHER,	- - - - -	Mr. M'Ready.
YOUNGER BROTHER,	- - - - -	Mr. Evett.
BACCHANALS,	- - - - -	{ Mr. Darley, Mr. Cubit.
		Women.
LADY,	- - - - -	Mrs. Pope.
EUPHROSYNE,	- - - - -	Mrs. Martyr.
BACCHANTES,	- - - - -	{ Mrs. Kennedy, Mrs. Morton.
SABRINA and PASTORAL NYMPH,	-	Mrs. Mountain.

Bacchanals, Naiads, Spirits, &c.





COMUS.

ACT I.

The SCENE discovers a wild Wood.

The first Attendant Spirit enters.

“ BEFORE the starry threshold of Jove’s court
“ My mansion is, where those immortal shapes
“ Of bright aerial spirits live inspher’d
“ In regions mild of calm and serene air,
“ Above the smoke and stir of this dim spot
“ Which men call earth, and with low-thoughted care
“ Confin’d and pester’d in this pinfold here
“ Strive to keep up a frail and fev’rish being,
“ Unmindful of the crown that virtue gives,
“ After this mortal change, to her true servants 10
“ Amongst the enthron’d gods on sainted seats.
“ Yet some there are that by due steps aspire
“ To lay their just hands on that golden key
“ That opes the palace of Eternity ;
“ To such my errand is ; and but for such
“ I would not soil these pure ambrosial weeds

" With the rank vapours of this sin-worn mould
 " But whence yon' slanting stream of purer light
 " Which streaks the midnight gloom, and hither darts
 " Its beamy point? Some messenger from Jove 20
 " Commission'd to direct or share my charge,
 " And if I ken him right a spirit pure
 " As treads the spangled pavement of the sky,
 " The gentle Philadel : but swift as thought
 " He comes——

" The second Attendant Spirit descends.

" Declare on what strange errand bent
 " Thou visitest this clime to me assign'd,
 " So far remote from thy appointed sphere.
 S. Spi. " On no appointed task thou seest me now ;
 " But, as returning from Elysian bow'rs 30
 " (Whither from mortal coil a soul I wafted)
 " Along this boundless sea of waving air
 " I steer'd my flight, betwixt the gloomy shade
 " Of these thick boughs thy radiant form I spy'd,
 " Gliding as streams the moon thro' dusky clouds ;
 " Instant I stoop'd my wing, and downward sped
 " To learn thy errand, and with thine to join
 " My kindred aid, from mortals ne'er withheld
 " When Virtue on the brink of peril stands.

F. Spi. " Then mark th' occasion that demands it
 here. 40

" Neptune, I need not tell, besides the sway
 " Of ev'ry salt flood and each ebbing stream,
 " Took in by lot, 'twixt high and nether Jove,



“ Imperial rule of all the sea-girt isles
“ That, like to rich and various gems, inlay
“ The unadorned bosom of the deep ;
“ Which he, to grace his tributary gods,
“ By course commits to sev’ral government,
“ And gives them leave to wear their sapphire crowns,
“ And wield their little tridents ; but this isle, 50
“ The greatest and the best of all the main,
“ He quarters to his blue-hair’d deities ;
“ And all this track that fronts the falling sun
“ A noble peer of mickle trust and pow’r
“ Has in his charge, with temper’d awe to guide
“ An old and haughty nation proud in arms.

S. Spi. “ Does any danger threat his legal sway
“ From bold sedition or close-ambush’d treason ?

F. Spi. “ No danger thence ; but to his lofty seat,
“ Which borders on the verge of this wild vale, 60
“ His blooming offspring, nurs’d in princely lore,
“ Are coming to attend their father’s state
“ And new entrusted sceptre, and their way
“ Lies thro’ the perplex’d path of this drear wood,
“ The nodding horror of whose shady brows
“ Threats the forlorn and wand’ring passenger ;
“ And here their tender age might suffer peril,
“ But that by quick command from sov’reign Jove
“ I was dispatch’d for their defence and guard.

S. Spi. “ What peril can their innocence assail 70
“ Within these lonely and unpeopled shades ?

F. Spi. “ Attend my words. No place but harbours
danger ;

“ In ev’ry region Virtue finds a foe.
“ Bacchus, that first from out the purple grape
“ Crush’d the sweet poison of misused wine,
“ After the Tuscan mariners transform’d,
“ Coasting the Tyrrhenne shore as the winds listed
“ On Circe’s island fell : (who knows not Circe,
“ The daughter of the Sun, whose charmed cup
“ Whoever tasted lost his upright shape, 80
“ And downward fell into a grov’ling swine ?)
“ This nymph, that gaz’d upon his clust’ring locks,
“ With ivy berries wreath’d, and his blithe youth,
“ Had by him, ere he parted thence, a son
“ Much like his father, but his mother more,
“ Whom therefore she brought up and Comus nam’d.
S. *Spi.* “ Ill-omen’d birth to Virtue and her sons!
F. *Spi.* “ He, ripe and frolick of his full grown age,
“ Roving the Celtick and Iberian fields,
“ At last betakes him to this ominous wood, 90
“ And in thick shelter of black shades imbower’d
“ Excels his mother at her mighty art,
“ Off’ring to ev’ry weary traveller
“ His orient liquor in a crystal glass
“ To quench the drought of Phœbus, which as they
taste,
“ (For most do taste thro’ fond intemp’rate thirst)
“ Soon as the potion works, their human count’nance,
“ Th’ express resemblance of the gods, is chang’d
“ Into some brutish form of wolf or bear,
“ Or ounce or tiger, hog or bearded goat, 100
“ All other parts remaining as they were :

" Yet, when he walks his tempting rounds, the sorcerer

" By magic pow'r their human face restores

" And outward beauty to delude the sight.

S. Spi. " Lose they the mem'ry of their former state ?

F. Spi. " No, they (so perfect is their misery)

" Not once perceive their foul disfigurement,

" But boast themselves more comely than before ;

" And all their friends and native home forget,

" To roll with pleasure in a sensual sty. 110

S. Spi. " Degrading fall ! from such a dire distress

" What pain too great our mortal charge to save ?

F. Spi. " For this, when any favour'd of high Jove

" Chances to pass thro' this advent'rous glade,

" Swift as the sparkle of a glancing star

" I shoot from heaven to give him safe convoy,

" As now I do ; and opportune thou com'st

" To share an office which thy nature loves.

" This be our task ; but first I must put off

" These my sky robes spun out of Iris' woof, 120

" And take the weeds and likeness of a swain

" That to the service of this house belongs,

" Who with his soft pipe and smooth-ditty'd song

" Well knows to still the wild winds when they roar,

" And hush the waving woods ; nor of less faith,

" And in this office of his mountain watch

" Likeliest and nearest to the present aid

" Of this occasion. Veil'd in such disguise

" Be it my care the sever'd youths to guide

" To their distress'd and lonely sister ; thine 130

" To cheer her footsteps thro' the magic wood.

" Whatever blessed spirit hovers near,
 " On errands bent to wand'ring mortal good,
 " If need require him summon to thy side ;
 " Unseen of mortal eye such thoughts inspire,
 " Such heaven-born confidence, as need demands
 " In hour of trial.

S. Spi. " Swift as winged winds

" To my glad charge I fly.

[Exit.

F. Spi. " —I'll wait a while

140

" To watch the sorcerer, for I hear the tread
 " Of hateful steps : I must be viewless now."

COMUS enters with a charming rod in one hand, his glass in the other, with him a rout of Men and Women dressed as Bacchanals ; they come in making a riotous and unruly noise, with torches in their hands.

Comus speaks.] The star that bids the shepherd fold
 Now the top of heav'n doth hold,
 And the gilded car of day
 His glowing axle doth allay
 In the steep Atlantic stream ;
 And the slope sun his upward beam
 Shoots against the dusky pole,
 Pacing tow'rd the other goal
 Of his chamber in the east ;
 Mean-while welcome joy and feast.

150

SONG.

*Now Phæbus sinketh in the west,
 Welcome song and welcome jest,*

Æt I.

COMUS.

21

*Midnight shout and revelry,
Tipsy dance and jollity:
Braid your locks with rosy twine,
Dropping odours, dropping wine.*

*Rigour now is gone to bed ;
And Advice with scrup'lous head, 160
Stri& Age and sour Severity,
With their grave saws, in slumber lie.*

We, that are of purer fire,
Imitate the starry choir,
Who, in their nightly watchful spheres,
Lead in swift round the months and years.
The sounds and seas, with all their finny drove,
Now to the moon in wav'ring morrice move,
And, on the tawny sands and shelves,
Trip the pert Fairies and the dapper Elves. 170

SONG. *By a Woman.*

*By dimpled brook and fountain brim
The Wood-nymphs, deck'd with daisies trim,
Their merry wakes and pastimes keep ;
What has night to do with sleep?
Night has better sweets to prove ;
Venus now wakes and wakens Love :
Come, let us our rites begin ;
'Tis only day-light that makes sin.*

Comus. Hail, goddess of nocturnal sport,
Dark-veil'd Cotytto! to whom the secret flame 180

Of midnight torches burn. Mysterious dame!
 That ne'er art call'd but when the dragon-womb
 Of Stygian darkness spits her thickest gloom,
 And makes one blot of all the air,
 Stay thy cloudy ebon chair,
 Wherein thou rid'st with Hecat', and befriend
 Us thy vow'd priests, till utmost end
 Of all thy dues be done, and none left out;
 Ere the blabbing eastern scout,
 The nice Morn, on th' Indian steep
 From her cabin loop-hole peep,
 And to the tell-tale Sun descry
 Our conceal'd solemnity.

190

SONG. *By COMUS and Woman.*

*From tyrant laws and customs free
 We follow sweet variety;
 By turns we drink, and dance, and sing,
 Love for ever on the wing.*

*Why should niggard rules control
 Transports of the jovial soul?
 No dull stinting hour we own;
 Pleasure counts our time alone.*

200

Comus. Come, knit hands and beat the ground
 In a light fantastic round.

A Dance.

Break off, break off; I feel the diff'rent pace
 Of some chaste footing near about this ground.

Run to your shrouds within these brakes and trees ;
 Our number may affright. Some virgin sure
 (For so I can distinguish by mine art)
 Benighted in these woods. Now to my charms,
 And to my wily trains. I shall ere long 210
 Be well stock'd with as fair a herd as graz'd
 About my mother Circe. Thus I hurl
 My dazzling spells into the spongy air,
 Of pow'r to cheat the eye with blear illusion,
 And give it false presentments, lest the place
 And my quaint habits breed astonishment,
 And put the damsel to suspicious flight ;
 Which must not be, for that's against my course.
 I, under fair pretence of friendly ends,
 And well-plac'd words of glozing courtesy, 220
 Baited with reasons not unplausible,
 Wind me into the easy-hearted man,
 And hug him into snares. When once her eye
 Hath met the virtue of this magic dust,
 I shall appear some harmless villager
 Whom thrift keeps up about his country gear.
 But here she comes ; I fairly step aside
 And hearken if I may her bus'ness here.

Enter the Lady.

Lady. This way the noise was, if mine ear be true,
 My best guide now : methought it was the sound 230
 Of riot and ill-manag'd merriment ;
 " Such as the jocund flute or gamesome pipe
 " Stirs up among the loose unletter'd hinds,

“ When, for their teeming flocks and granges full,
“ In wanton dance they praise the bounteous Pan,
“ And thank the gods amiss.” I should be loath
To meet the rudeness and swill’d insolence
Of such late rioters ; yet oh ! where else
Shall I inform my unacquainted feet
In the blind mazes of this tangled wood ? 240

Comus aside.] I’ll ease her of that care, and be her
guide.

Lady. My brothers, when they saw me weary’d out
“ With this long way, resolving here to lodge
“ Under the spreading favour of these pines,”
Stepp’d, as they said, to the next thicket side
To bring me berries, or such cooling fruit
As the kind hospitable woods provide.
“ They left me then when the grey-hooded Even,
“ Like a sad votarist in palmer’s weeds, 249
“ Rose from the hindmost wheels of Phæbus’ wain ;”
But where they are, and why they come not back,
Is now the labour of my thoughts : ’tis likeliest
They had engag’d their wand’ring steps too far.
“ This is the place, as well as I may guess,
“ Whence, ev’n now, the tumult of loud mirth
“ Was rife, and perfect in my list’ning ear,
“ Yet nought but single darkness do I find.
“ What might this be ? A thousand fantasies
“ Begin to throng into my memory,
“ Of calling shapes and beck’ning shadows dire, 250
“ And aery tongues, that syllable mens’ names
“ On sands, and shores, and desert wildernesses.

ÆT I.

COMUS.

25

" These thoughts may startle well, but not astound,
" The virtuous mind, that ever walks attended
" By a strong siding champion, Conscience.
" O! welcome pure-ey'd Faith, white-handed Hope,
" Thou hov'ring angel, girt with golden wings,
" And thou unblemish'd form of Chastity!
" I see you visibly, and now believe,
" That he, the supreme Good (to whom all things ill
" Are but as slavish officers of vengeance) 271
" Would send a glist'ring guardian, if need were,
" To keep my life and honour unassail'd.
" Was I deceiv'd, or did a sable cloud
" Turn forth her silver lining on the night?
" I did not err; there does a sable cloud
" Turn forth her silver lining on the night,
" And casts a gleam over this tufted grove."
I cannot halloo to my brothers, but
Such noise as I can make to be heard farthest 280
I'll venture, for my new enliven'd spirits
Prompt me, and they perhaps are not far off.

SONG.

*Sweet Echo, sweetest nymph! that liv'st unseen
Within thy aery cell,
By slow Mæander's margent green,
And in the violet-embroider'd vale,
Where the lovelorn nightingale
Nightly to thee her sad song mourneth well,
Canst thou not tell me of a gentle pair
That liketh thy Narcissus are?*

290

D

*Oh! if thou have
 Hid them in some flow'ry cave,
 Tell me but where,
 Sweet queen of parly, daughter of the Sphere!
 So may'st thou be translated to the skies,
 And give resounding grace to all heav'n's harmonies.*

Comus aside.] Can any mortal mixture of earth's
 mould

Breathe such divine enchanting ravishment?

" Sure something holy lodges in that breast,
 " And with these raptures moves the vocal air 300

" To testify his hidden residence :

" How sweetly did they float upon the wings
 " Of silence through the empty-vaulted night,

" At ev'ry fall smoothing the raven down
 " Of darkness till it smil'd ! I have oft' heard

" My mother Circe, with the Sirens three,
 " Amidst the flow'ry-kirtled Naiades,

" Culling their potent herbs and baleful drugs,
 " Who, as they sung, would take the prison'd soul
 " And lap it in Elysium : Scylla wept, 310

" And chid her barking waves into attention,
 " And fell Charybdis murmur'd soft applause ;
 " Yet they in pleasing slumber lull'd the sense,
 " And sweet in madness robb'd it of itself ;

" But such a sacred and home-felt delight,
 " Such sober certainty of waking bliss,
 " I never heard till now."—I'll speak to her,
 And she shall be my queen.—Hail, foreign wonder!

Whom certain these rough shades did never breed,
 Unless the goddess that, in rural shrine, 320
 Dwell'st here with Pan or Silvan, by bless'd song
 Forbidding ev'ry bleak unkindly fog
 To touch the prosp'rous growth of this tall wood.

Lady. Nay, gentle Shepherd! ill is lost that praise
 That is address'd to unattending ears:
 Not any boast of skill, but extreme shift
 How to regain my sever'd company,
 Compell'd me to awake the courteous Echo
 To give me answer from her mossy couch.

Com. What chance, good Lady, hath bereft you thus?

Lady. Dim darkness and this leafy labyrinth. 331

Com. Could that divide you from near-ush'ring guides?

Lady. They left me weary on a grassy turf.

Com. "By falsehood or discourtesy, or why?"

"*Lady.*" To seek i' th' valley some cool friendly
 spring.

Com. And left your fair side all unguarded, Lady!

Lady. They were but twain, and purpos'd quick re-
 turn.

Com. "Perhaps forestalling night prevented them?"

Lady. "How easy my misfortune is to hit!"

Com. Imports their loss beside the present need?

Lady. No less than if I should my brothers lose. 341

Com. Were they of manly prime or youthful bloom?

Lady. As smooth as Hebe's their unrazor'd lips.

Com. Two such I saw "what time the labour'd ox
 "In his loose traces from the furrow came,
 "And the swink't hedger at his supper sat;

" I saw them" under a " green" mantling vine,
That crawls along the side of yon' small hill,
Plucking ripe clusters from the tender shoots :
Their port was more than human ; " as they stood
" I took it for a fairy vision 351
" Of some gay creatures of the element,
" That in the colours of the rainbow live,
" And play i' th' plighted clouds. I was awe-struck,
" And as I pass'd I worshipp'd : " if those you seek
It were a journey like the path to heav'n
To help you find them.

Lady. Gentle Villager,

What readiest way would bring me to that place ?

Com. " Due west it rises from this shrubby point.

Lady. " To find out that, good Shepherd, I suppose,

" In such a scant allowance of star-light, 362

" Would overtask the best land pilot's art,

" Without the sure guess of well-practis'd feet."

Com. I know each lane and ev'ry alley green,

Dingle or bushy dell, of this wide wood,

" And ev'ry bosky bourn from side to side,"

My daily walks and ancient neighbourhood ;

And if your stray attendants be yet lodg'd,

Or shroud within these limits, I shall know 370

Ere morrow wake, " or the low-roosted lark

" From her thatch'd pallat rouse : if" otherwise,

I can conduct you Lady to a low

But loyal cottage, where you may be safe

Till farther quest.

Lady. Shepherd, I take thy word,

And trust thy honest offer'd courtesy,
 "Which oft' is sooner found in lowly sheds
 "With smoky rafters, than in tap'stry halls
 "And courts of princes, where it first was nam'd, 380
 "And yet is most pretended." In a place
 Less warranted than this, or less secure,
 I cannot be, that I should fear to change it.
 Eye me, bless'd Providence, and square my trial
 To my proportion'd strength—Shepherd, lead on.

[*Exeunt.*]

Enter COMUS' Crew from behind the trees.

SONG. *By a Man.*

*Fly swiftly, ye Minutes! till Comus receive
 The nameless soft transports that beauty can give;
 The bowl's frolick joys let him teach her to prove,
 And she in return yield the raptures of love.*

*Without love and wine, wit and beauty are vain,
 All grandeur insipid, and riches a pain, 391
 The most splendid palace grows dark as the grave:
 Love and wine give, ye Gods, or take back what you gave.*

CHORUS.

*Away, away, away,
 To Comus' court repair;
 There night outshines the day,
 There yields the melting fair.*

397

ACT II.

Enter the two BROTHERS.

“ Elder Brother.

“ UNMUFFLE, ye faint Stars ! and thou, fair Moon !
“ That wont'st to love the traveller's benison,
“ Stoop thy pale visage thro' an amber cloud,
“ And disinherit Chaos, that reigns here
“ In double night of darkness and of shades ;
“ Or if your influence be quite damm'd up
“ With black usurping mists, some gentle taper,
“ Tho' a rush candle, from the wicker-hole
“ Of some clay habitation, visit us
“ With thy long levell'd rule of streaming light, 10
“ And thou shalt be our star of Arcady
“ Or Tyrian Cynosure.

Y. Bro. “ Or, if our eyes
“ Be barr'd that happiness, might we but hear
“ The folded flocks penn'd in their wattled cotes,
“ Or sound of past'ral reed with oaten stops,
“ Or whistle from the lodge, or village cock
“ Count the night-watches to his feathery dames,
“ 'Twould be some solace yet, some little cheering,
“ In this close dungeon of innum'rous boughs. 20
“ But oh ! that hapless virgin, our lost sister !
“ Where may she wander now, whither betake her
“ From the chill dew, amongst rude burs and thistles ?
“ Perhaps some cold bank is her bolster now,

" Or 'gainst the rugged bark of some broad elm
 " Leans her unpillow'd head, fraught with sad fears
 " What if in wild amazement and affright?
 " Or, while we speak, within the direful grasp
 " Of savage hunger or of savage heat?

E. Bro. " Peace brother; be not over exquisite 30

" To cast the fashion of uncertain evils;
 " For, grant they be so, while they rest unknown
 " What need a man forestal his date of grief,
 " And run to meet what he would most avoid?
 " Of if they be but false alarms of fear
 " How bitter is such self-delusion!
 " I do not think my sister so to seek,
 " Or so unprincipled in virtue's book,
 " And the sweet peace that goodness bosoms ever,
 " As that the single want of light and noise 40
 " (Not being in danger, as I trust she is not)
 " Could stir the constant mood of her calm thoughts,
 " And put them into misbecoming plight.
 " Virtue could see to do what Virtue would
 " By her own radiant light tho' sun and moon
 " Were in the flat sea sunk; and Wisdom's self
 " Oft' seeks to sweet retired solitude,
 " Where with her best nurse, Contemplation,
 " She plumes her feathers and lets grow her wings,
 " That in the various bustle of resort 50
 " Were allto ruffled, and sometimes impair'd.
 " He, that has light within his own clear breast,
 " May sit i' th' centre and enjoy bright day;
 " But he, that hides a dark soul and foul thoughts,

" Benighted walks under the mid-day sun ;

" Himself is his own dungeon.

Y. Bro. " 'Tis most true

" That musing Meditation most affects

" The pensive secrecy of desert cell,

" Far from the chearful haunt of men and herds, 60

" And sits as safe as in a senate house ;

" For who would rob a hermit of his weeds,

" His few books, or his beads, or maple dish,

" Or do his grey hairs any violence ?

" But Beauty, like the fair Hesperian tree

" Laden with blooming gold, had need the guard

" Of dragon watch with unenchanted eye,

" To save her blossoms, and defend her fruit

" From the rash hand of bold Incontinence.

" You may as well spread out the unsunn'd heaps 70

" Of misers' treasure by an outlaw's den

" And tell me it is safe, as bid me hope

" Danger will wink on opportunity,

" And let a single helpless maiden pass

" Uninjur'd in this wild surrounding waste.

" Of night or loneliness it recks me not ;

" I fear the dread events that dog them both,

" Lest some ill-greeting touch attempt the person

" Of our unowned sister.

E. Bro. " I do not, brother,

80

" Infer as if I thought my sister's state

" Secure, without all doubt or controversy ;

" Yet, where an equal poise of hope and fear

" Does arbitrate th' event, my nature is

“ That I incline to hope rather than fear,
 “ And gladly banish squint suspicion.
 “ My sister is not so defenceless left
 “ As you imagine ; she has a hidden strength
 “ Which you remember not.

Y. Bro. “ What hidden strength 90

“ Unless the strength of Heav’n ? if you mean that.

E. Bro. “ I mean that too ; but yet a hidden
 strength,

“ Which, if Heav’n gave it, may be term’d her own ;
 “ ’Tis chastity, my brother, chastity :

“ She that has that is clad in complete steel,
 “ And like a quiver’d nymph with arrows keen
 “ May trace huge forests and unharbour’d heaths,

“ Infamous hills and sandy perilous wilds,
 “ Where thro’ the sacred rays of chastity
 “ No savage fierce, bandit, or mountaineer, 100

“ Will dare to soil her virgin purity ;
 “ Yea, there where very desolation dwells,
 “ By grotts and caverns shagg’d with horrid shades,

“ She may pass on with unblench’d majesty,
 “ Be it not done in pride or in presumption.

“ Some say no evil thing that walks by night
 “ In fog or fire, by lake or moorish fen,
 “ Blue meagre hag, or stubborn unlaid ghost,
 “ That breaks his magick chains at curfew time,

“ No goblin, or swart Faery of the mine, 110
 “ Hath hurtful pow’r o’er true virginity.—

“ Do ye believe me yet, or shall I call
 “ Antiquity from the old schools of Greece

" To testify the arms of Chastity ?
" Hence had the huntress Dian her dread bow,
" Fair silver-shafted queen, for ever chaste !
" Wherewith she tam'd the brinded lioness
" And spotted mountain pard, but set at nought
" The friv'lous bolt of Cupid : gods and men
" Fear'd her stern frown, and she was Queen o' th'
Woods. 120

" What was the snaky-headed Gorgon shield
" That wise Minerva wore, unconquer'd virgin !
" Wherewith she freez'd her foes to congeal'd stone,
" But rigid looks of chaste austerity
" And noble grace, that dash'd brute violence
" With sudden adoration and blank awe ?
" So dear to Heav'n is saintly chastity,
" That, when a soul is found sincerely so,
" A thousand livery'd angels lacquey her,
" Driving far off each thing of sin and guilt, 130
" And in clear dream and solemn vision
" Tell her of things that no gross ear can hear,
" Till oft' converse with heav'nly habitants
" Begin to cast a beam on th' outward shape,
" The unpolluted temple of the mind,
" And turn it by degrees to the soul's essence,
" Till all be made immortal.
" But when lust
" By unchaste looks, loose gestures, and foul talk,
" But most by lewd and lavish act of sin, 140
" Lets in defilement to the inward parts,
" The soul grows clotted by contagion,

" Imbodies and imbrutes, till she quite lose
 " The divine property of her first being.
 " Such are those thick and gloomy shadows damp
 " Oft' seen in charnel vaults and sepulchres,
 " Ling'ring and sitting by a new-made grave,
 " As loath to leave the body that it lov'd,
 " And link'd itself in carnal sensuality
 " To a degen'rate and degraded state. 150

Y. Bro. " How charming is divine philosophy!
 " Not harsh and crabbed, as dull fools suppose,
 " But musical as is Apollo's lute,
 " And a perpetual feast of nectar'd sweets,
 " Where no crude surfeit reigns."

E. Bro. ———List, list! I hear
 Some far-off halloo break the silent air.

Y. Bro. Methought so too; what should it be?

E. Bro. For certain
 Either some one like us night-founder'd here, 160
 Or else some neighbour woodman, or at worst
 Some roving robber calling to his fellows.

Y. Bro. Heav'n keep my sister! Again! again! and near!

Best draw, and stand upon our guard.

E. Bro. I'll halloo;
 If he be friendly he comes well; if not,
 Defence is a good cause, and Heav'n be for us.

Enter the first Attendant Spirit, habited like a Shepherd.

Y. Bro. That halloo I should know—What are you? speak.

"Come not too near; you fall on iron stakes else."

"*F.*" *Spi.* What voice is that? my young lord?
Speak again. 170

Y. Bro. O brother, 't is my father's shepherd sure.

E. Bro. Thyrsis? whose artful strains have oft' delay'd

The huddling brook to hear his madrigal,
And sweeten'd ev'ry muskrose of the dale,
How cam'st thou here good Swain? has any ram
Slipp'd from the fold, or young kid lost his dam,
Or straggling wether the pent flock forsook?
How couldst thou find this dark sequester'd nook?

"*F.*" *Spi.* O my lov'd master's heir, and his next joy!

"I came not here on such a trivial toy 180

"As a stray'd ewe, or to pursue the stealth

"Of pilf'ring wolf: not all the fleecy wealth

"That doth enrich these downs is worth a thought

"To this my errand, and the care it brought.

"But oh!" *where is my virgin lady? where is she?*

How chance she is not in your company?

E. Bro. To tell thee sadly, Shepherd, without blame
Or our neglect we lost her as we came.

"*F.*" *Spi.* Ah me! unhappy! then my fears are true.

E. Bro. What fears, good Thyrsis! prithee briefly
shew? 190

F. Spi. "I'll tell ye: 't is not vain, nor fabulous,

"(Tho' so esteem'd by shallow ignorance)

"What the sage poets, taught by th' heav'nly Muse,

"Story'd of old in high immortal verse,

"Of dire Chimeras, and enchanted isles,

“ And rifted rocks, whose entrance leads to hell ;

“ For such there be ; but unbelief is blind.

E. Bro. “ Proceed, good Shepherd ! I am all attention.”

“ *F.*” *Spi.* Within the navel of this hideous wood,
Immur’d in cypress shades, a sorcerer dwells, 200
Of Bacchus and of Circe born, great Comus,
Deep skill’d in all his mother’s witcheries, ~
And wanton as his father ;

“ And here to ev’ry thirsty wanderer

“ By sly enticements gives his baneful cup,

“ With many murmurs mix’d, whose pleasing poison

“ The visage quite transforms of him that drinks,

“ And the inglorious likeness of a beast

“ Fixes instead, unmoulding reason’s mintage

“ Character’d in the face.” This have I learnt 210

Tending my flock hard by, “ i’ th’ hilly crofts

“ That brow this bottom glade,” whence night by
night

He and his monstrous rout are heard to howl

“ Like stabled wolves or tigers at their prey,

“ Doing abhorred rites to Hecate

“ In their obscured haunts and inmost bow’rs.”

Yet have they many baits and guileful spells,

And beauty’s tempting semblance can put on

T’ inveigle and invite th’ unwary sense

“ Of them that pass unweeting by the way.” 220

But hark ! the beaten timbrel’s jarring sound

And wild tumultuous mirth proclaim their presence ;

Onward they move ; “ and see ! a blazing torch

"Gleams thro' the shade," and this way guides their steps.

Let us withdraw a while and watch their motions.

[*They retire.*]

Enter COMUS' Crew revelling, and by turns caressing each other, till they observe the Two Brothers; then the Elder Brother advances and speaks.

E. Bro. What are you, speak, that thus in wanton riot
And midnight revelry, like drunken Bacchanals,
Invade the silence of these lonely shades?

F. Wom. Ye godlike youths! "whose radiant forms
excel

"The blooming grace of Maia's winged son," 230
Bless the propitious star that led you to us;
We are the happiest of the race of mortals,
Of freedom, mirth, and joy, the only heirs:
But you shall share them with us; for this cup,
This nectar'd cup, the sweet assurance gives
Of present and the pledge of future bliss.

[*She offers them the cup, which they both put by.*]

SONG. *By a Man.*

*By the gayly circling glass
We can see how minutes pass,
By the hollow cask are told
How the waning night grows old.*

240

*Soon, too soon, the busy day
Drives us from our sport and play:
What have we with day to do?
Sons of care 't was made for you.*

E. Bro. Forbear, nor offer us the poison'd sweets
That thus have render'd thee thy sex's shame,
All sense of honour banish'd from thy breast.

" SONG.

" *Fame's an echo, prattling double,*
" *An empty, airy, glitt'ring, bubble;*
" *A breath can swell a breath can sink it,* 250
" *The wise not worth their keeping think it.*

" *Why then, why such toil and pain*
" *Fame's uncertain smiles to gain ?*
" *Like her sister Fortune blind,*
" *To the best she's oft' unkind,*
" *And the worst her favour find.*

E. Bro. " By her own sentence Virtue stands ab-
solv'd,
" Nor asks an echo from the tongues of men
" To tell what hourly to herself she proves.
" Who wants his own no other praise enjoys; 260
" His ear receives it as a fulsome tale
" To which his heart in secret gives the lie :
" Nay, slander'd innocence must feel a peace,
" An inward peace, which flatter'd guilt ne'er knew."
F. Wom. Oh! how unseemly shews in blooming
youth

Such grey severity! — But come with us,
We to the bow'r of bliss will guide your steps;
There you shall taste the joys that Nature sheds

On the gay spring of life, youth's flow'ry prime,
 From morn to noon, from noon to dewy eve, 270
 Each rising hour by rising pleasures mark'd.

SONG. *By a Woman in a pastoral habit.*

*Would you taste the noon-tide air,
 To yon' fragrant bow'r repair,
 Where woven with the poplar bough
 The mantling vine will shelter you.*

*Down each side a fountain flows,
 Tinkling, murm'ring, as it goes,
 Lightly o'er the mossy ground,
 Sultry Phæbus scorching round.*

*Round the languid herds and sheep 280
 Stretch'd o'er sunny hillocks sleep,
 While on the hyacinth and rose
 The fair does all alone repose.*

*All alone——and in her arms
 Your breast may beat to love's alarms,
 Till bless'd and blessing you shall own
 The joys of love are joys alone.*

E. Bro. “How low sinks beauty when by vice de-
 bas'd !

“How fair that form if virtue dwelt within !

“But from this shameless advocate of shame 290

“To me the warbled song harsh discord grates.

Y. Bro. "Short is the course of ev'ry lawless pleasure;
 " Grief like a shade on all its footsteps waits,
 " Scarce visible in joy's meridian height,
 " But downward as its blaze declining speeds
 " The dwarfish shadow to a giant spreads."

F. Wom. No more ; these formal maxims misbecome
 you ;
 They only suit suspicious shrivell'd Age.

SONG. *By a Man and two Women.*

*Live and love, enjoy the fair,
 Banish sorrow, banish care ;* 300
*Mind not what old dotards say ;
 Age has had his share of play,
 But youth's sport begins to-day.*

*From the fruits of sweet delight
 Let not scare-crow Virtue fright :
 Here in Pleasure's vine-yard we
 Rove like birds from tree to tree,
 Careless, airy, gay, and free.*

E. Bro. How can your impious tongues profane the
 name
 Of sacred Virtue, and yet promise pleasure 310
 In lying songs of vanity and vice ?
 From virtue sever'd, pleasure phrenzy grows,
 " The gay delirium of the fev'rish mind,
 " And always flies at reason's cool return.

F. Wom. "Perhaps it may; [perhaps the sweetest joys

Of love itself from passion's folly spring;
But say, does wisdom greater bliss bestow?

E. Bro. "Alike from love's and pleasure's path you stray,

"In sensual folly blindly seeking both,

"Your pleasure riot, lust your boasted love. 320

"Capricious, wanton, bold, and brutal, lust

"Is meanly selfish, when resisted cruel,

"And like the blast of pestilential winds

"Taints the sweet bloom of Nature's fairest forms:

"But love, like od'rous Zephyr's grateful breath,

"Repays the flow'r that sweetness which it borrows;

"Uninjuring, uninjur'd, lovers move

"In their own sphere of happiness content,

"By mutual truth avoiding mutual blame."

But we forget: who hears the voice of Truth 330

In noisy riot and intemp'rance drown'd?

Thyrsis, be then our guide; we'll follow thee,

And some good angel bear a shield before us!

[*Exeunt Brothers and Spirit.*

F. Wom. Come, come, my friends, and partners of my joys,

Leave to these pedant youth their bookish dreams;

"Poor blinded boys, by their blind guides misled!

"A beardless Cynick is the shame of nature,"

Beyond the cure of this inspiring cup;

"And my contempt, at best my pity, moves."

Away, nor waste a moment more about 'em. 340

CHORUS.

*Away, away, away,
To Comus' court repair,
There night outshines the day,
There yields the melting fair. [Exeunt singing.**

E. Bro. "She's gone! may scorn pursue her wanton arts,

"And all the painted charms that vice can wear.

"Yet oft' o'er credulous youth such Sirens triumph,

"And lead their captive sense in chains as strong

"As links of adamant. Let us be free,

"And to secure our freedom, virtuous. 350

Y. Bro. "But should our helpless sister meet the rage

"Of this insulting troop what could she do?

"What hope, what comfort, what support, were left?

Spi. "She meets not them; but yet, if right I guess,

"A harder trial on her virtue waits.

E. Bro. "Protect her Heav'n! But whence this sad conjecture?

Spi. "This ev'ning late, by then the chewing flocks

"Had ta'en their supper on the sav'ry herb

"Of knot-grass dew-besprent, and were in fold,

"I sat me down to watch upon a bank 360

"With ivy canopy'd, and interwove

"With flaunting honeysuckle, and began,

"Wrapp'd in a pleasing fit of melancholy,

"To meditate my rural minstrelsy,

"Till Fancy had her fill; but ere a close,

* The first Act ends here as now performed.

“ The wonted roar was up amidst the woods,
“ And fill’d the air with barbarous dissonance,
“ At which I ceas’d, and listen’d them a while.

Y. Bro. “ What follow’d then? O! if our helpless
sister—

Spi. “ Strait an unusual stop of sudden silence 370
“ Gave respite to the drowsy-flighted steeds
“ That draw the litter of close-curtain’d Sleep.
“ At last a soft and solemn breathing sound
“ Rose like a steam of rich distill’d perfumes,
“ And stole upon the air, that ev’n Silence
“ Was took ere she was ’ware, and wished she might
“ Deny her nature, and be never more,
“ Still to be so displac’d. I was all ear,
“ And took in strains that might create a soul
“ Under the ribs of Death—but oh! ere long 380
“ Too well I did perceive it was the voice
“ Of my most honour’d lady your dear sister.

Y. Bro. “ O my foreboding heart! too true my fears.

Spi. “ Amaz’d I stood, harrow’d with grief and fear,
“ And O! poor hapless nightingale, thought I,
“ How sweet thou sing’st, how near the deadly snare!
“ Then down the lawns I ran with headlong haste,
“ Thro’ paths and turnings often trod by day,
“ Till guided by my ear I found the place
“ Where the damn’d wizard, hid in sly disguise, 390
“ (For so by certain signs I knew) had met
“ Already, ere my best speed to prevent,
“ The aidless innocent lady, his wish’d prey,
“ Who gently ask’d if he had seen such two,

" Supposing him some neighbour villager.
 " Longer I durst not stay, but soon I guess'd
 " Ye were the two she meant; with that I sprung
 " Into swift flight till I had found you here;
 " But farther know I not.

Y. Bro. " O night and shades!

400

" How are ye join'd with hell in triple knot
 " Against th' unarmed weakness of one virgin,
 " Alone and helpless! Is this the confidence
 " You gave me brother?

E. Bro. " Yes, and keep it still,

" Lean on it safely; not a period
 " Shall be unsaid for me. Against the threats
 " Of malice or of sorcery, or that pow'r
 " Which erring men call Chance, this I hold firm,
 " *Virtue may be assail'd but never hurt,* 410
 " *Surpris'd by unjust force but not inthrall'd;*
 " *Yea, even that which mischief meant most harm*
 " *Shall in the happy trial prove most glory:*
 " *But evil on itself shall back recoil,*
 " *And mix no more with goodness; when at last*
 " *Gather'd like scum, and settled to itself,*
 " *It shall be in eternal restless change,*
 " *Self-fed and self-consum'd. If this fail*
 " *The pillar'd firmament is rottenness,*
 " *And earth's base built on stubble.* But come, let's on;
 " Against th' opposing will and arm of Heav'n 421
 " May never this just sword be lifted up;
 " But for that damn'd magician, let him be girt
 " With all the griesly legions that troop

“ Under the sooty flag of Acheron,
“ Harpies and Hydras, or all the monstrous forms
“ ’Twixt Africa and Inde, I’ll find him out,
“ And force him to restore his purchase back,
“ Or drag him by the curls to a foul death,
“ Curs’d as his life. 430

Spi. “ Alas ! good vent’rous youth,
“ I love thy courage yet, and bold emprise ;
“ But here thy sword can do thee little stead :
“ Far other arms, and other weapons must
“ Be those that quell the might of hellish charms.
“ He with his bare wand can unthread thy joints,
“ And crumble all thy sinews.

E. Bro. “ Why prithee, shepherd,
“ How durst thou then thyself approach so near,
“ As to make this relation ? 440

Spi. “ A shepherd lad,
“ Of small regard to see to, yet well skill’d
“ In every virtuous plant and healing herb,
“ That spreads her verdant leaf to the morning ray,
“ Has shewn me simples of a thousand names,
“ Telling their strange and vigorous faculties.
“ Among the rest a small unsightly root,
“ But of divine effect, he cull’d me out ;
“ And bad me keep it as of sov’reign use
“ ’Gainst all enchantment, mildew, blast, or damp,
“ Or ghastly fury’s apparition. 451

“ I purs’d it up. If you have this about you
“ (As I will give you when you go) you may
“ Boldly assault the necromancer’s hall ;

“ Where if he be, with dauntless hardihood
 “ And brandished blade rush on him, break his glass,
 “ And shed the luscious liquor on the ground ;
 “ But seize his wand, tho’ he and his curs’d crew
 “ Fierce sign of battle make, and menace high,
 “ Or like the sons of Vulcan vomit smoke, 460
 “ Yet will they soon retire, if he but shrink.”

ACT III.

“ *Scene opens, and discovers*” a magnificent Hall in COMUS’s Palace, “ *set off with all the gay decorations proper for an ancient banqueting-room.*” COMUS and Attendants stand on each side of the Lady, who is seated in an enchanted chair ; “ *and by her looks and gestures expresses great signs of uneasiness and melancholy.*”

COMUS speaks.

“ HENCE, loathed melancholy,
 “ Of Cerberus and blackest midnight born,
 “ In Stygian cave forlorn,
 “ ’Mongst horrid shapes, and shrieks, and sights unholy,
 “ Find out some uncouth cell,
 “ Where brooding darkness spreads his jealous wings
 “ And the night-raven sings ;
 “ There, under ebon-shades, and low-brow’d rocks,
 “ As ragged as thy locks,

" In dark Cimmerian desert ever dwell.

10

" But" come, thou goddess fair and free,

In heaven yclep'd Euphrosyné,

And by men, heart-easing Mirth,

Whom lovely Venus at a birth

With two sister Graces more,

To ivy-crowned Bacchus bore.

Haste thee, nymph, and bring with thee

Jest and youthful jollity,

Quips and cranks, and wanton wiles,

20

Nods and becks, and wreathed smiles,

Such as hang on Hebe's cheek,

And love to live in dimple sleek ;

Sport, that wrinkled Care derides,

And Laughter holding both his sides.

Come, and trip it as you go,

On the light fantastic toe ;

And in thy right hand lead with thee

The mountain-nymph, sweet Liberty.

[Whilst these lines are repeating, enter a Nymph representing EUPHROSYNE, or Mirth; who advances to the Lady, and sings the following song.]

SONG.

Come, come, bid adieu to fear,

Love and harmony live here,

30

No domestic jealous jars,

Buzzing slanders, wordy wars,

In my presence will appear ;

Love and harmony reign here.

*Sighs to amorous sighs returning,
Pulses beating, bosoms burning,
Bosoms with warm wishes panting,
Words to speak those wishes wanting,
Are the only tumults here,
All the woes you need to fear;
Love and harmony reign here.*

40

Lady. How long must I, by magick fetters chain'd
To this detested seat, hear odious strains
Of shameless folly, which my soul abhors?

Com. Ye sedge-crown'd Naiades, by twilight seen
Along Mæander's mazy border green,
At Comus' call appear in all your azure sheen.

[*He waves his Wand, the Naiads enter, and range themselves in order to dance.*]

Now softly slow let Lydian measures move,
And breathe the pleasing pangs of gentle love.

[*"The Naiads dance a slow dance expressive of the passion of Love."*]

[*"After this dance" the pastoral Nymph advances slow, with a melancholy and desponding air, to the side of the stage, and repeats, by way of soliloquy, the first six lines, and then sings the ballad. In the mean time she is observed by EUPHROSYNE, who by her gesture expresses to the audience her different sentiments of the subject of her complaint, suitably to the character of their several songs.*]

RECITATIVE.

How gentle was my Damon's air! 50
 Like sunny beams his golden hair,
 His voice was like the nightingale's,
 More sweet his breath than flow'ry vales.
 How hard such beauties to resign!
 And yet that cruel task is mine!

A BALLAD.

*On every hill, in every grove,
 Along the margin of each stream,
 Dear conscious scenes of former love,
 I mourn, and Damon is my theme.*
*The hills, the groves, the streams remain, 60
 But Damon there I seek in vain.*

*"Now to the mossy cave I fly,
 "Where to my swain I oft have sung,
 "Well pleas'd the browsing goats to spy,
 "As o'er the airy steep they hung.
 "The mossy cave, the goats remain,
 "But Damon there I seek in vain.*

*"Now through the winding vale I pass,
 "And sigh to see the well-known shade;
 "I weep, and kiss the bended grass, 70
 "Where love and Damon fondly play'd.
 "The vale, the shade, the grass remain,
 "But Damon there I seek in vain."*

*From hill, from dale, each charm is fled,
Groves, flocks, and fountains please no more,
Each flower in pity droops its head,
All nature does my loss deplore.
All, all reproach the faithless swain,
Yet Damon still I seek in vain.*

RECITATIVE. By EUPHROSYNE.

*Love, the greatest bliss below, 80
How to taste few women know ;
Fewer still the way have hit
How a fickle swain to quit.
Simple nymphs then learn of me,
How to treat inconstancy.*

BALLAD.

*The wanton god, that pierces hearts,
Dips in gall his pointed darts ;
But the nymph disdains to pine ;
Who bathes the wound with rosy wine.*

*Farewell lovers, when they're cloy'd ; 90
If I am scorn'd, because enjoy'd.
Sure the squeamish fops are free
To rid me of dull company.*

*They have charms whilst mine can please ;
I love them much, but more my ease ;
Nor jealous fears my love molest,
Nor faithless vows shall break my rest.*

*Why should they e'er give me pain,
 Who to give me joy disdain?
 All I hope of mortal man,
 Is to love me whilst he can.*

100

COMUS speaks.

Cast thine eyes around, and see
 How from ev'ry element
 Nature's sweets are cull'd for thee,
 And her choicest blessings sent.

"Fire, water, earth, and air, combine
 "To compose the rich repast,
 "Their aid the distant seasons join
 "To court thy smell, thy sight, thy taste."

Hither summer, autumn, spring, 110
 Hither all your tributes bring:
 All on bended knee be seen
 Paying homage to your queen.

[After this "they put on their chaplets and prepare for
 "the feast: while COMUS is advancing with his cup,
 "and one of his attendants offers a chaplet to the Lady,
 "(which she throws on the ground with indignation)
 "the preparation for the feast is interrupted by lofty
 "and solemn musick from above, whence" the second
 Attendant Spirit enters gradually in a splendid machine,
 repeating the following lines to the Lady, and sings, re-
 maining still invisible to COMUS and his crew.

From the realms of peace above,
 From the source of heavenly love,
 From the starry throne of Jove,
 Where tuneful Muses in a glitt'ring ring,
 To the celestial lyre's eternal string
 Patient Virtue's triumph sing;
 To these dim labyrinths where mortals stray,
 Maz'd in passion's pathless way, 121
 To save thy purer breast from spot and blame
 Thy guardian Spirit came.

SONG.

*Nor on beds of fading flowers,
 Shedding soon their gaudy pride;
 Nor with swains in Syren bowers,
 Will true pleasure long reside.*

*On awful virtue's hill sublime,
 Enthroned sits th' immortal fair;
 Who wins her height, must patient climb, 130
 The steps are peril, toil and care.*

*So from the first did Jove ordain,
 Eternal bliss for transient pain.*

[Exit the Spirit, the music playing loud and solemn.]

Lady. Thanks, heav'nly songster! whosoe'er thou
 art,
 Who deign'st to enter these unhallow'd walls,
 To bring the song of virtue to mine ear!

O cease not, cease not the melodious strain,
Till my rapt soul high on the swelling note
To heav'n ascend——far from these horrid fiends!

Com. Mere airy dreams of air-bred people these?
Who look with envy on more happy man; 141
“And would decry the joys they cannot taste.
“Quit not the substance for a stalking shade
“Of hollow virtue, which eludes the grasp.”
Drink this, and you will scorn such idle tales.

[*He offers the cup, which she puts by, and attempts to rise.*]

Nay, lady, sit; if I but wave this wand,
Your nerves are all bound up in alabaster,
And you a statue: “or, as Daphne was,
“Root-bound, that fled Apollo.”

Lady. Fool, do not boast; 150
Thou can'st not touch the freedom of my mind
With all thy charms, altho' this corp'ral rind
Thou hast immanacl'd, while heav'n sees good.

Com. Why are you vex'd, lady? why do you frown?
Here dwell no frowns nor anger; from these gates
Sorrow flies far. See, here be all the pleasures
That fancy can beget on youthful thoughts,
“When the fresh blood grows lively and returns
“Brisk as the April buds in primrose season.”
And first behold this cordial julep here, 160
That flames and dances in his crystal bounds,
“With spirits of balm and fragrant syrups mix'd,
“Not that Nepenthes, which the wife of Thone
“In Ægypt gave to Jove-born Helena,

"Is of such pow'r to stir up joy, as this,
"To life so friendly, or so cool to thirst."

Lady. Know base deluder, that I will not taste it.
Keep thy detested gifts for such as these.

[*Points to his crew.*]

SONG. *By a Man.*

*Mortals, learn your lives to measure
Not by length of time, but pleasure ; 170
Soon your spring must have a fall ;
Losing youth, is losing all :
Then you'll ask, but none will give,
And may linger, but not live.*

Com. Why shou'd you be so cruel to yourself,
And to those dainty limbs, which Nature lent
For gentle usage and soft delicacy ?
"But you invert the cov'nants of her trust,
"And harshly deal, like an ill borrower,
"With that which you receiv'd on other terms, 180
"Scorning the unexempt condition,
"By which all human frailty must subsist,
"Refreshment after toil, ease after pain ;"
That have been tir'd all day without repast,
And timely rest have wanted. But, fair virgin,
This will restore all soon.

Lady. 'Twill not, false traitor !
'Twill not restore the truth and honesty
That thou hast banish'd from thy tongue with lies.
Was this the cottage and the safe abode, 190

Thou told'st me of? Hence with thy brew'd enchantments.

"Hast thou betray'd my credulous innocence
 "With vizard'd falshood, and base forgery?
 "And would'st thou seek again to trap me here
 "With liqu'rish baits, fit to ensnare a brute?"
 Were it a draught for Juno when she banquets,
 I wou'd not taste thy treas'nous offer—None,
 But such as are good men, can give good things;
 And that which is not good is not delicious
 To a well-govern'd and wise appetite. 200

Com. "O, foolishness of men! that lend their ears
 "To those budge doctors of the Stoic fur,
 "And fetch their precepts from the Cynic tub,
 "Praising the lean and sallow abstinence.
 "Wherefore did Nature pour her bounties forth
 "With such a full and unwithdrawing hand,
 "Cov'ring the earth with odours, fruits, and flocks,
 "Thronging the seas with spawn innumerable,
 "But all to please and sate the curious taste;
 "And set to work millions of spinning worms, 210
 "That in their green shops weave the smooth-hair'd
 silk,
 "To deck her sons; and, that no corner might
 "Be vacant of her plenty, in her own loins
 "She hutch'd th' all-worshipp'd ore, and precious
 gems
 "To store her children with; if all the world
 "Should in a pet of temp'rance feed on pulse,
 "Drink the clear stream, and nothing wear but frieze,

“ Th’ All-giver would be unthank’d, would be un-
prais’d,

“ Not half his riches known, and yet despis’d,

“ And we should serve him as a grudging master,

“ As a penurious niggard of his wealth, 221

“ And live like Nature’s bastards, not her sons ;

“ Who would be quite surcharg’d with her own
weight,

“ And strangled with her waste fertility.

Lady. “ I had not thought to have unlock’d my lips

“ In this unhallow’d air, but that this juggler

“ Wou’d think to charm my judgment, as mine eyes,

“ Obtruding false rules, prank’d in reason’s garb.

“ I hate when vice can bolt her arguments,

“ And virtue has no tongue to check her pride, 230

“ Impostor, do not charge most innocent Nature,

“ As if she would her children should be riotous

“ With her abundance. She, good cateress,

“ Means her provision only to the good,

“ That live according to her sober laws,

“ And holy dictate of spare Temperance.

“ If ev’ry just man, that now pines with want,

“ Had but a mod’rate and beseeeming share

“ Of that which lewdly-pamper’d Luxury

“ Now heaps upon some few with vast excess, 240

“ Nature’s full blessings would be well dispens’d

“ In unsuperfluous even proportion,

“ And she no whit encumber’d with her store ;

“ And then the Giver wou’d be better thank’d,

“ His praise due paid. For swinish Gluttony

“ Ne’er looks to heav’n amidst his gorgeous feast,
 “ But with besotted, base ingratitude
 “ Crams, and blasphemes his feeder.” Shall I go on?
 Or have I said enough?

Com. Enough to shew 250
 That you are cheated by the lying boasts
 Of starving pedants, that affect a fame
 From scorning pleasures, which they cannot reach.

EUPHROSYNE sings. *

*Preach not to me your musty rules,
 Ye drones that mould in idle cell;
 The heart is wiser than the schools,
 The senses always reason well.*

*If short my span, I less can spare
 To pass a single pleasure by;
 An hour is long, if lost in care; 260
 They only live, who life enjoy.*

Com. “ These are the maxims of the truly wise,
 “ Of such as practise what they preach to others.
 “ Here are no hypocrites, no grave dissemblers;
 “ Nor pining grief, nor eating cares approach us,
 “ Nor sighs, nor murmurs—but of gentle Love,
 “ Whose woes delight; What must his pleasures then?

“ EUPHROSYNE sings.

“ *Ye Fauns, and ye Dryads, from hill, dale, and grove,
 “ Trip, trip it along, conducted by Love;*

* Sung by Comus, as now performed at Covent-garden Theatre.

" *Swiftly resort to Comus' gay court,*

270

" *And in various measures shew Love's various sport.*

" *Enter the Fauns and Dryads, and attend to the fol-*

" *lowing directions. The tune is play'd a second time,*

" *to which they dance.*

" *Now lighter and gayer, ye tinkling strings, sound ;*

" *Light, light in the air, ye nimble nymphs, bound. ;*

" *Now, now with quick feet the ground beat, beat, beat*

" *Now with quick feet the ground beat, beat, beat, &c.*

" *Now cold and denying,*

" *Now kind and complying,*

" *Consenting, repenting,*

" *Disdaining, complaining,*

" *Indifference now feigning,* 280

" *Again with quick feet the ground beat, beat, beat.*

" *[Exeunt Dancers.]*

Com. List, Lady, be not coy, and be not cozen'd
With that same vaunted name Virginity.

" *Beauty is nature's coin, must not be hoarded,*

" *But must be current, and the good thereof*

" *Consists in mutual and partaken bliss,*

" *Unsavory in th' enjoyment of itself : -*

" *If you let slip time, like a neglected rose,*

" *It withers on the stalk with languish'd head.*

" *Beauty is nature's brag, and must be shown* 290

" *In courts, at feasts, and high solemnities,*

" *Where most may wonder at the workmanship.*

" *It is for homely features to keep home,*

" *They had their name thence : Coarse complexions,*

“ And cheeks of sorry grain, will serve to ply
“ The sampler, and to teaze the housewife’s wool.”
What need a vermeil tinctur’d lip for that,
Love-darting eyes, or tresses like the morn ?
There was another meaning in these gifts ;
Think what, and be advis’d : you are but young yet ;
This will inform you soon. 301

Lady. “ To him that dares
“ Arm his profane tongue with contemptuous words
“ Against the sun-clad power of chastity,
“ Fain would I something say, yet to what purpose ?
“ Thou hast nor ear, nor soul to apprehend ;
“ And thou art worthy that thou should’st not know
“ More happiness than this thy present lot.
“ Enjoy your dear wit, and gay rhetoric,
“ That has so well been taught her dazzling fence :
“ Thou art not fit to hear thyself convinc’d, 311
“ Yet should I try, the uncontrolled worth
“ Of this pure cause would kindle my rapt spirits
“ To such a flame of sacred vehemence,
“ That dumb things would be mov’d to sympathize,
“ And the brute earth would lend her nerves, and
shake,
“ Till all thy magic structures, rear’d so high,
“ Were shatter’d into heaps o’er thy false head.

Com. “ She fables not, I feel that I do fear
“ Her words set off by some superior pow’r ; 320
“ And tho’ not mortal, yet a cold shudd’ring dew
“ Dips me all o’er, as when the wrath of Jove
“ Speaks thunder, and the chains of Erebus,

" To some of Saturn's crew. I must dissemble,
 " And try her yet more strongly—Come, no more,
 " This is meer moral babble, and direct
 " Against the canon laws of our foundation ;
 " I must not suffer this, yet 'tis but the lees
 " And settlings of a melancholy blood ;
 " But this will cure all strait," one sip of this 330
 Will bathe the drooping spirits in delight,
 Beyond the bliss of dreams. Be wise, and taste.—

*[The Brothers rush in with swords drawn, wrest the glass
 out of his hand, and break it against the ground ; his
 rout make signs of resistance, but are all driven in.]*

Enter the First Spirit.

What, have you let the false enchanter scape ?
 O, ye mistook, you should have snatch'd his wand
 And bound him fast ; without his rod revers'd,
 " And backward mutters of dissev'ring pow'r,"
 We cannot free the lady, that sits here
 In stony fetters fix'd, and motionless.
 Yet stay, be not disturb'd ; now I bethink me,
 " Some other means I have, which may be us'd, 340
 " Which once of Melibæus old I learn'd,
 " The soothest shepherd that e'er pip'd on plains :
 " I learn'd 'em then, when with my fellow swain,
 " The youthful Lycidas, his flocks I fed."
 There is a gentle nymph not far from hence,
 Sabrina is her name, a virgin pure,
 That sways the Severn stream ;

“ And, as the old swain said,” she can unlock
The clasping charm, and thaw the numbing spell,
If she be right invok’d in warbled song : 350
“ For maidenhood she loves, and will be swift
“ To aid a virgin, such as was herself.
“ And see the swain himself in season comes.”

Enter the Second Spirit.

Haste, Lycidas, and try thy tuneful strain,
Which from her bed the fair Sabrina calls.

SONG. *By Second Spirit.*

*Sabrina fair,
Listen where thou art sitting
Under the glassy, cool, translucent wave,
In twisted braids of lilies knitting
The loose train of thy amber-dropping hair ; 360
Listen for dear honour’s sake,
Goddess of the silver lake,
Listen and save.*

SABRINA rises and sings.

*By the rushy-fringed bank,
Where grows the willow and the osier dank,
My sliding chariot stays,
Thick set with agate, and the azure sheen
Of Turkis blue, and em’rald green,
That in the channel strays ;*

Æt III.

COMUS.

63

"Whilst from off the waters fleet

370

"Thus I set my printless feet

"O'er the cowslip's velvet head,

"That bends not as I tread;"

Gentle swain, at thy request,

I am here.

RECITATIVE. Second Spirit.

Goddess dear,

We implore thy powerful hand

To undo the charmed band

Of true virgin here distress'd,

Thro' the force, and thro' the wile,

380

Of unblest'd enchanter vile.

RECITATIVE. Sabrina.

Shepherd, 'tis my office best

To help ensnared chastity :

Brightest lady, look on me ;

Thus I sprinkle on thy breast

Drops, that from my fountain pure

I have kept, of precious cure ;

Thrice upon thy finger's tip,

Thrice upon thy ruby'd lip ;

Next this marble venom'd seat,

390

Smear'd with gums of glutinous heat,

I touch with chaste palms moist and cold ;

Now the spell hath lost his hold ;

And I must haste, ere morning-hour,

To wait in Amphitrite's bower.

[SABRINA descends, and the Lady rises out of her seat ;
the Brothers embrace her tenderly.

E. Bro. "I oft had heard, but ne'er believ'd till now,
" There are, who can by potent magic spells
" Bend to their crooked purpose nature's laws,
" Blot the fair moon from her resplendent orb,
" Bid whirling planets stop their destin'd course, 400
" And thro' the yawning earth from Stygian gloom
" Call up the meagre ghost to walks of light :
" It may be so,——for some mysterious end !"

Y. Bro. Why did I doubt ? Why tempt the wrath
of heav'n

To shed just vengeance on my weak distrust ?

" Here spotless innocence has found relief,
" By means as wond'rous as her strange distress."

E. Bro. The freedom of the mind, you see, no
charm,

No spell can reach ; that righteous Jove forbids,
Lest man should call his frail divinity 410
'The slave of evil, or the sport of chance.
Inform us, Thyrsis, if for this thine aid,
We aught can pay that equals thy desert.

First Spirit discovering himself.

Pay it to Heaven ! There my mansion is :

" But when a mortal, favour'd of high Jove,
" Chances to pass thro' yon advent'rous glade,
" Swift as the sparkle of a glancing star

"I shoot from heav'n to give him safe convoy."
That lent you grace to escape this cursed place;
To heaven, that here has try'd your youth, 420
Your faith, your patience, and your truth,
And sent you thro' these hard essays
With a crown of deathless praise.

[*Then the two first Spirits advance and speak alternately the following lines, which MILTON calls epiloguizing.*

To the ocean now I fly,
And those happy climes that lye
Where day never shuts his eye
Up in the broad fields of the sky:
There I suck the liquid air,
All amidst the gardens fair
Of Hesperus, and his Daughters three, 430
That sing about the golden tree.

Along the crisped shades and bowers
Revels the spruce and jocund Spring;
The Graces and the rosy-bosom'd Hours
Thither all their bounties bring;
There eternal Summer dwells,
And west-winds with musky wing
About the cedarn alleys fling
Nard and Cassia's balmy smells.

Now my task is smoothly done, 440
I can fly or I can run
Quickly to the green earth's end,
Where the bow'd welkin slow doth bend;

And from thence can soar as soon
To the corners of the moon.
Mortals that would follow me,
Love Virtue, she alone is free :
She can teach you how to climb
Higher than the sphery chime ;
Or, if Virtue feeble were,
Heaven itself would stoop to her.

45°

Chorus. *Taught by virtue, you may climb
Higher than the sphery chime ;
Or, if Virtue feeble were,
Heaven itself would stoop to her.*

THE END.



EPILOGUE.

SPOKEN BY

EUPHROSYNE, WITH A WAND AND CUP.

*SOME critic, or I'm much deceived, will ask,
"What means this wild, this allegoric masque?
Beyond all bounds of truth this author shoots;
Can wands or cups transform men into brutes?
'Tis idle stuff!"—And yet I'll prove it true;
Attend; for sure I mean it not of you.
The mealy fop, that tastes my cup, may try,
How quick the change from beau to butterfly;
But o'er the Insect should the Brute prevail,
He grins a monkey with a length of tail. 10
One stroke of this,* as sure as Cupid's arrow,
Turns the warm youth into a wanton sparrow.
Nay, the cold prude becomes a slave to love,
Feels a new warmth, and cooes a billing dove.
The sly coquet, whose artful tears beguile
Unwary hearts, weeps a false crocodile.
Dull poring pedants, shock'd at truth's keen light,
Turn moles, and plunge again in friendly night;
Misers grow vultures, of rapacious mind,
Or more than vultures, they devour their kind; 20*

* The Wand.

EPILOGUE.

*Flatt'ers cameleons, creeping on the ground,
With ev'ry changing colour changing round.
The party-fool, beneath his heavy load,
Drudges a driven ass thro' dirty road.
While guzzling sots, their spouses say, are hogs;
And snarling critics, authors swear, are dogs.
But to be grave, I hope we've prov'd at least,
All vice is folly, and makes man a beast.*

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